



The New River Improvement Project



A Project of the California Mexico Border Relations Council and the City of Calexico

New River Improvement Project

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

One Stop Center
860 Main Street
Brawley, CA 92227-2628

Wednesday
December 15, 2010
2:00 p.m.

Meeting Notes

- 1) **Welcome and Introductions.** The New River Improvement Project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair Ricardo Martinez (California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)) called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. In attendance were the following committee members /designees/alternates: Daniel Garza (California Environmental Protection Agency alternate), Luis Olmedo (Comité Cívico del Valle), Steve Charlton (Imperial Irrigation District designee), , Linsey Dale (Imperial County Farm Bureau), Jonathan Ballard (U.S. General Services Administration), and Leon Lesicka (Citizens Congressional Task Force on the New River). Committee members in attendance by phone were Eduardo Demesa (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Miguel Figueroa (Calexico New River Committee), and Dr. Marilyn Underwood (California Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Branch)(at 3:00 p.m.). Committee members unable to attend included Jose Angel (Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board alternate TAC Chair), Ema Rosa Silva (Calexico Community Representative/Vecinos de Calexico), Anna Milloy (California Department of Fish and Game, Bermuda Dunes Office), Andy Horne (County of Imperial designee), Luis Estrada (City of Calexico), Frank Gonzalez (CalTrans), Lisa Santana (International Boundary and Water Commission) Antonio Ortega (Office of Assembly Member V. Manuel Perez designee). Also in attendance were Rebecca Little Owl (International Boundary and Water Commission alternate), Roger Vintze (California Department of Toxics and Substance Control), Ozzie Morales (Department of Toxic Substances Control), Carlos Angulo (CalEPA), Rebecca Terrazas-Baxter (Office of Assemblymember V. Manuel Perez) and facilitators Carl Nettleton and Gabriela Coverdale (Nettleton Strategies).
- 2) **Acceptance of Meeting Notes of November 18, 2010, Meeting.** Upon motion, Ballard, second, Charlton, the notes from the November 18, 2010, meeting were unanimously accepted with one change, correctly spelling Roger Vintze's name.
- 3) **TAC Chair Update.** Chair Ricardo Martinez reported there were no updates other than it does appear the new administration will continue to see the New River as a priority.

There are still some TAC members who have not signed the Charter. Committee members were reminded to submit the signature page from the Charter to Carl Nettleton.

4) Facilitating Discussion of Information Needed to Move Forward. Gabriela Coverdale presented the first iteration of maps in the GIS program to help move the strategic plan discussions forward. She also repeated the short presentation on the value of GIS that had been shown at the November 4, 2010, meeting.

- a) **Background on Facilities Existing or Approved/Funded Along the New River.** The first sections displayed were the background map layers which included public Infrastructure, parks and other recreational assets, and other layers such as property ownership, land use, etc. The purpose of these background layers is to provide context for how remediation and visioning options might complement or conflict with existing facilities. The committee suggested adding the IID drains layer.
- b) **Various Visions for the New River.** The next sections displayed were the various layers that represented possible visions or future uses of the river. The information provided by the Visioning Work Group was displayed as well as additional information about a river-wide wetlands concept. The committee suggested adding the new plan for the River Parkway from the Calxico New River Committee (being funded by CalTrans) which is really part of the greenbelts. Informational items included learning that:
 - i) The Port of Entry construction contract will likely be awarded next summer,
 - ii) The bridge for the Port of Entry will avoid wetlands on both sides of the river, avoiding the need for a 404 permit,
 - iii) A meeting was held with the Army Corps regulatory unit, TAC member Ed DeMesa will be contacted by the Jacobs construction manager to discuss.
 - iv) Rip rap might be placed along the river banks as part of the Port of Entry project.
 - v) Putting trails along the river from Salton Sea to the border is premature; the river needs to be cleaned up first.
 - vi) There is a concept to create an algae/biodiesel operation that would use contaminated river water with the result biodiesel for sale and cleaner water that would be released back into the river after a 22-day holding period.
 - vii) The wetlands concept throughout the river could include 2,400 acres of gravity flow wetlands and an additional 4,000 acres if pumping is included. The biodiesel group might pay for the wetlands (put in funding matrix).
 - viii) If the water is cleaned upstream, it wouldn't be available for biofuels production as dirty water.
- c) **Impairments / Possible Remediation Options.** The third section of mapped layers included the locations of the list of impairments provided at a previous meeting by the Impairments and Remediation Workgroup. The WorkGroup was asked to complete the matrix identifying the sources of the impairments and options for remediation. Some initial remediation options provided by the workgroups were presented on the

map, including trash screens, natural treatment wetlands, a double culvert (encasement), flow diversion facilities, a wastewater polishing system, and headworks.

The committee provided the following information:

- i) The diversion on the map should be shifted to the wastewater plant on the west side of the river.
- ii) Drop 2 should be shifted to north of Brawley, southeast of the intersection of Rutherford and Highway 111.
- iii) As part of the remediation for silt and sediment leaving the fields, the list of IID drains should be added that reflects the TMDL and the BMPs that have been implemented by the farms. These BMPs will be shown on the map.
- iv) Finally, to make the maps easier to work with, areas of the river will be created to refine the focus. Those areas will be separated into several agricultural stretches of the river and the populated areas.

5) Discussion of Possible January Public Meeting. By consensus, the group agreed that the month of January would be needed to plan for a public meeting in February. Dates and locations will be determined.

6) Update from Workgroups. The workgroup discussions included the following:

- a) **Impairments/Remediation.** Roger Vintze and Ozzie Morales from the Department of Toxics and Substance Control provided information about sampling in the New River.
 - i) His group did sampling in December 2009 at the border, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile down near the water treatment plant, and in spoil piles, looking predominantly in the sediments. They also sampled to the siphon in the sediment, in the flood plain, north of the New River, east of the water treatment plant. That information can be made available to the TAC.
 - ii) This sampling will determine if there is a need to remove the sediments and if there would be unacceptable health risks.
 - iii) Of seven sample sites from the border to the wastewater treatment plant, none of them were above the hazardous waste level.
 - iv) Took soil sediment samples and water column samples.
 - v) Next they will take 20 to 30 samples to establish if there is hazardous waste.
 - vi) The first quarter mile of the river is a straight shot with high velocity where the sediment will stay in the water column. At the curves, the sediment will start to drop out.
 - vii) They will space sampling out as they approach the siphon. Evidence will be available to make the determination if it is hazardous waste. The removal would be the owner's responsibility. If it's not hazardous waste, that changes how it could be removed. Periodically they will take more samples in the spoil piles looking for anomalies.
 - viii) Roger and Jon will get together to discuss renovation of the Port of Entry relative to the sampling.

- ix) The TAC was advised to distinguish between sediments and the water in trying to understand the impairments.
 - b) **New River Visioning.** No additional information was available.
 - c) **Funding/Background.** Dan Garza provided an updated work plan for the Funding and Background Work Group. He also provided an up-to-date summary of appropriations and funding opportunities for the New River Improvement Project (attached) prepared by Antonio Ortega.
- 8) **Next Steps.** The next steps involve the following:
- a) Identifying the sources of impairments
 - b) Completing a first list of remediation options for each impairment.
 - c) Planning for the proposed February public meeting.
 - d) The next meeting of the TAC will be held on January 13, 2011, at 2:00 p.m.
- 9) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.